

# MONTAUK

*By*

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The object of this sketch is not to describe the peninsula of Montauk, nor to deal with the aboriginal history of the tract, but rather to shed light upon a most beautiful section of Long Island, which is a terra incognita to most New Yorkers. The "Legends of Montauk", published by J. A. Ayres in 1849, contain a good detailed description of the peninsula, and anyone may refer to that work for further information, if he so desires. The terminus of the Montauk Division of the Long Island Railroad is at Montauk Station, on Fort Pond Bay, at the Sound side, and the tract of land beyond that point is visited by few people. However, anyone who has ventured out there once, will surely revisit the place. It is more than seventy years since Mr. Ayres published his book, but his description very nearly fits conditions of this day.

Montauk Peninsula contains nine thousand acres, and is thirty miles in length. If the road, which runs through the entire tract, would not be in existence, with the telegraph poles along its line, a traveler could imagine himself to be living in the days of Wyandank, so little has the appearance of the eastern part of the peninsula changed. The present sketch describes this easternmost part of the tract, from the railroad terminus to the Lighthouse at Montauk Point.

For many years before the above mentioned book was written, and for years thereafter, there were four houses on Montauk. The First House, since destroyed by fire, stood east of Amagansett and about four miles west of Fort Pond. The Second House is at Fort Pond; the Third House four miles further east, and the Fourth House at the Point. On old maps the First, Second and Third House are mentioned by these names, the fourth was included under the name Montauk Point or Montauk Light. Upon a hill on the east-

ern border of Fort Pond, called by the aborigines Kongonock, stood the principal fort of the Montauk, one of the four tribes of the eastern federation, and near by, in a valley, was the village of Wyandank. The trees on the eastern end are dwarfed; the rolling hills remind one of the scenic railway, so popular at seaside resorts; the sand dunes are not bare but have a green cover, and the turf is smooth, as if cut with a lawn mower.

The railroad comes to an end at Montauk Station, a little settlement on Fort Pond Bay. This bay is shaped like the letter U, the point on the eastern side being known as Rocky Point. The traveler, who feels that he is entitled to a meal, after a ride of four or five hours on the train, can be accommodated. Mr. Edwards has a hot lunch ready when the New York morning train arrives at 1:30 P. M. His usual patrons are the members of the train crew, but passengers are welcome, and a good meal is set before them. To reach the settlement on the oceanside, the traveler has the choice of two roads. The old road leads along the western border of Fort Pond, around the foot of the hills to the ocean, a distance of one and a half miles. The second is a splendid cement road, recently constructed from the station to Camp Welsh, along the east side of the pond. This road increases the distance to two and a half miles, but it is a drive second to none, and will be a great factor in making motorists acquainted with Montauk. Pedestrians will probably prefer the old road, as the hills afford protection against the sun and the distance is less. There is no protection against the sun along the new road, but the heat is seldom oppressive, as the fresh breezes from the ocean as well as from the sound, keep the air in motion.

When Camp Welsh is reached, the ocean is before you, and just west of the camp on the edge of the pond stands the Second House, a substantial, shingled building of dark brown color with white trimming. It has been remodelled, dormer windows and a wing were added. However, it is still a good specimen of the architecture of the end of the 18th Century. Past this house winds the road running from Easthampton

through Amagansett out to Montauk Point. The traveler will have to follow the road westward, in the direction toward Amagansett. As soon as he leaves the Second House, the little settlement comes within his view. There is the white frame building of the Hither Plains Life Saving Station in the distance, and a few hundred feet nearer is the Parsons House. Mr. Parsons has built several cottages to accommodate the increasing number of guests, and also a garage. The cottages are not set in a straight line; near the garage is the little red schoolhouse. Then there are the two cottages of Mrs. Smith, and several other cottages scattered around in a velvety green setting. A very plain, unpainted building occupies a commanding site upon an elevation, where it can be seen from any point for miles around. In all its simplicity the house adds to the picturesqueness of the scene. In fact, the simplicity of the entire settlement is its greatest asset. There is a peculiar charm in the view before you. The ocean in all its greatness, the rolling waves, beating against a beautiful sandy beach; in the rear the hills, and there the Life Saving Station and the few houses make a picture of peacefulness which no brush can reproduce and no pen can describe. To the tired and wornout New Yorker this view is medicine. The air is pure, and a walk of ten miles here seems less of a strain than an hour's walk in the city. Mosquitoes, as a rule, are not found at Montauk, but occasionally a number of these pests are driven by the wind in this direction, and are forced to make a landing here. The Parsons House and Mrs. Smith's establishment are of the first class, and no fault can be found with either rooms or the table. Anyone who wishes to spend a short time on the ocean shore and is looking for a place where he can enjoy nature, have a nice clean room, good meals and pure water, will be pleased here. One who would miss moving picture houses and the attractions of Coney Island, as shooting galleries, merry-go-rounds, etc., had better stay at the western end of Long Island, as he would pine away at the eastern end.

To reach Montauk Point one has to travel along the road eastward, the natives say seven miles; but to New Yorkers

the distance resembles more ten city miles. Mrs. Parsons as well as Mrs. Smith can accommodate their guests with an automobile, but in order to see the country, a hike is to be recommended. The road has been improved within the last year, and marching along it becomes easy, when your eyes are kept busy by an ever-changing view. Leaving the settlement and passing the Second House, you come to Camp Welsh. During the summer months soldiers are there in training—four cannon are stationed east of the camp and four more some distance to the northeast. Four cannon are set off at the same moment, and the other four answer. In the evening the Sons of Mars return to the camp, the horses are driven to the pond for watering, and at sunset the camp presents a picture of peace. Down at the ocean a bugler makes attempts to get some melody out of his instrument, but the roaring of the waves drowns the sound, thus nobody suffers. On the right you soon see the Ditch Plains Life Saving Station, and from now on the rolling hills change the view continually. You come to the Great Pond, alias Lake Wyandank; in this pond, on the side near the sound is an island, the original of Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island. Further along, on one of the highest points, are the houses of the Montauk proprietors. The one nearest to the road is the Hoyt place, built of massive stones with a steep sloping roof, devoid of all unnecessary ornaments, and thoroughly fitting into the scenery. To the north of the road is seen the Third House; the Second House appears to have been a counterpart to this, before it was remodelled. The Third House is a farmhouse, the land on which it stands, is tilled. All the other land remains as it was in the days of Wyandank. On reaching the top of a hill, a white blanket spreads out before your eyes. Bushes covered with white blossoms, fill every inch of space on either side. Then the road turns and the view changes completely.

The upper part of the lighthouse comes into view, but is soon lost again; then a larger portion of the structure can be seen; another hill affords a still more extended view, and eventually Montauk Point lies before your eyes, a truly

beautiful sight. All disappears, and as the road turns, you get the next view from a different angle. The yellow sand embankment, abruptly falling off to the sea, appears, and soon the Point can be fully seen. Where the waters of the ocean and sound mingle, stands the lighthouse, reared upon Turtle Hill in 1795, during the second term as President, of George Washington. The original structure was built up to and including the red painted part. The upper white portion was added soon after 1860. Before the end of the road is reached at the lighthouse, you pass the Wyandank, a hospitable place kept by Mrs. Smith, where you can get lunch. If you should happen to be staying at Mrs. Smith's cottage, near the Hither Plains Life Saving Station, for the day or week, you may have your meal, taken here, charged to your bill at Mrs. Smith's Cottage, ten miles away. This habit of considering everyone honest, peculiar to this section, strikes a New Yorker forcibly, and brings the fact home to him that he is far off from the Great White Way.

A gentleman of rare taste had recently one of the old windmills in the Hamptons transplanted to Montauk Point. The old structure, erected in 1763, occupies a high point west of the lighthouse. A shingled house, fully in keeping with the windmill as to architecture, size, etc., has been erected and connected with the mill. The lighthouse stands at the very end of the island, but you may still keep on traveling, if you wish to. Upwards this time, a winding stairs has to be climbed, and one hundred and thirty-seven steps will bring you to the light which points the way to navigators. Turtle Hill and the entire Point seem to be an immense sand pile, packed so tight that it is equal to a giant rock. If you descend to the water, you will find in place of a sandy beach, a beach of stones. There are stones of every size, from little pebbles to big boulders of three feet and more in diameter, washed smooth and rounded by the work of the waves of ages. When the waves come in, they partly lift many thousands of the smaller stones, and the noise caused by this resembles the sound of a battery of cannon set off at a distance.

The ponds on the peninsula, including the Wyandank and

Fort Pond, are fresh water ponds. Near the lighthouse, and very little above the sea level, are two of these ponds; the nearest is known as Money Pond. Little bridges running out from the rocky shore, are built for the use of the fishermen. They have to be rebuilt every year, as the winter storms destroy them.

The hike to the Point and the stay there has kept eyes and mind busy, and the way back is shortened by trying to assort the impressions received during the trip. The walk and the air have created an appetite, and your host or hostess, knowing full well how the Montauk air affects strangers, has a plentiful dinner ready, to which you will do full honor. After dinner you will probably take a stroll along the beach or to one of the hills in the cool evening breeze, and then settle down on the porch to enjoy the concert and fireworks peculiar to this place, i.e., the pounding of the eternal waves upon the sand and the sight of the untold number of stars above you—stars apparently altogether different from those seen over New York. The clear air of Montauk reveals the real sky in a summer night, while New Yorkers are used to seeing the stars through a haze. Very little midnight oil is burned at Montauk. By ten o'clock all the stars of the screen would here lose their attraction, and what could be only partially achieved by curfew or martial law in the city, is here done voluntarily by everyone. All retire to their rooms, and a surprising result would have to be recorded, were dictographs installed in these rooms. The usual monologue runs like this: "I have walked twenty miles, still I do not feel tired; but, oh—I think I'll sleep twenty-four hours."

Through the open window comes the sound of the roaring of the untiring ocean waves, grander than ever in the stillness of the night. It feels good to listen to the waves—for five minutes. Dreams are unknown at Montauk, and nightmares unheard of. In the early morning hours the roosters crow, but no one is disturbed by them. The breakfast bell is a powerful instrument, and necessarily so, for otherwise you would miss your breakfast, and today you want your breakfast, if you never did before.



